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Beijing, China

REVIEW OF PROGRAMME PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

(Item 5 (c) of the provisional agenda)

Marine Protected Areas

Note by the Secretariat

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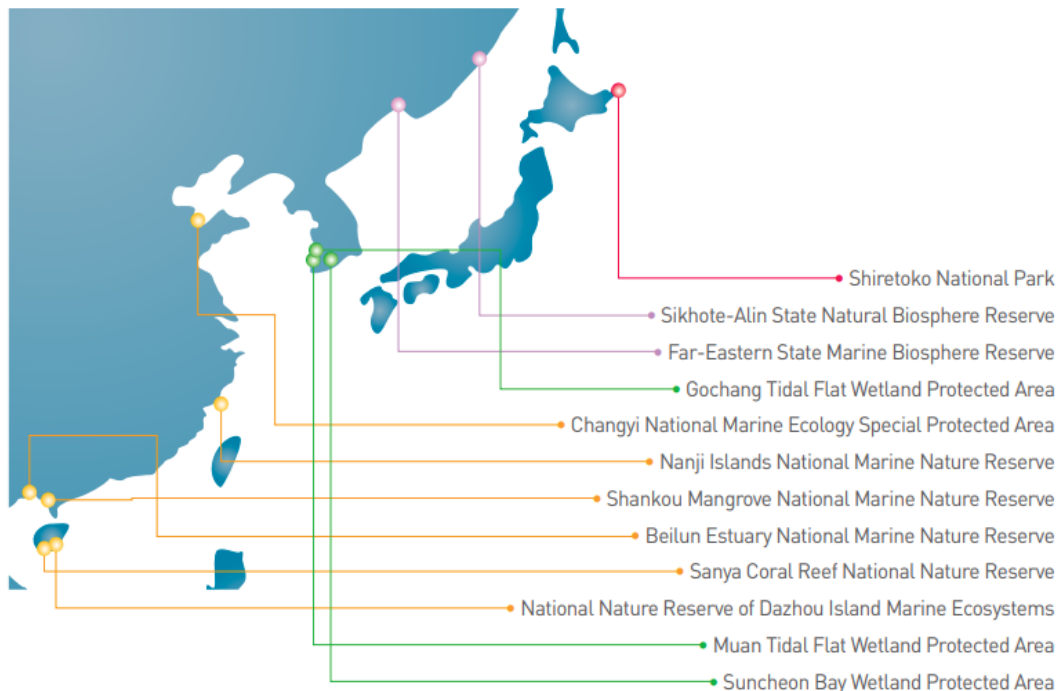
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I. BACKGROUND

1. Launched at the 18th Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-18) in 2013, the North-East Asian Marine Protected Areas Network (NEAMPAN) is focused on strengthening subregional cooperation on the marine environment, coastal biodiversity and effective MPA management. NEAMPAN's operations and policy direction are overseen by its Steering Committee, with members nominated by their respective governments. The Committee consists of government officials and researchers from China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation, and is also responsible for planning, monitoring and recommending NEAMPAN activities and programmes.

2. Over the past decade, the secretariat organized two NEAMPAN workshops (2016 and 2021), one seminar in collaboration with the Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (YSLME) Project Management Office, three webinars, as well as regular and ad-hoc Steering Committee meetings. Additionally, NEAMPAN completed one research project titled "Management Plans, Monitoring and Assessment of Marine Protected Areas", which included two review meetings with the authors and reports translated into Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Russian. As of 2024, NEAMPAN includes 12 sites nominated by member States: six in China, one in Japan, three in the Republic of Korea, and two in the Russian Federation (Figure 1).

Figure 1. NEAMPAN Sites



3. In recent years, the global community has increasingly recognized the vital role of oceans in addressing climate change. International initiatives are increasingly focused on ocean-based solutions as essential components in achieving climate goals, particularly through nature-based solutions, blue carbon ecosystems, and sustainable marine resource management. For example, the G20's 2022 recommendation on "Promoting Ocean-Based Solutions to Climate Change" highlights the importance of blue carbon as a powerful tool to mitigate emission and protect biodiversity. The UN Ocean Decade (2021-2030) underscores the need for scientific research and international collaboration to address pressing ocean-climate issues, including the development of resilient MPAs that can adapt to changing conditions. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) also encourages member States to join efforts for the Ocean-Based Climate Action (OBCA) and scale up blue carbon projects and adopt ecosystem-based management approaches, highlighting the role of MPAs in climate adaptation strategies. NEAMPAN has also contributed to raising awareness of MPA's roles in addressing climate change through two webinars in 2022 and 2023 and has initiated a research project focusing on climate change and MPAs since 2023.

4. NEAMPAN's role is becoming critical in facilitating knowledge sharing on climate-resilient MPA management and fostering cross-country cooperation; to ensure active participation of NEASPEC member States in global and regional initiatives; and to support their contributions to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

II. PROGRESS OF THE ACTIVITIES ON MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Webinar: Towards Effective Management of Marine Mammals in the East Asia Seas: The Marine Mammals Management Toolkit

5. The secretariat organized a Webinar in collaboration with the Marine Mammal Twinning initiative - part of the EU-funded Ocean Governance Project - and the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) on 29 November 2023. During the webinar, two experts, including one NEAMPAN Steering Committee member from China, highlighted the importance of marine mammals. This was followed by an introduction of a marine mammal's management toolkit by the Marine Mammal Twinning team, which was designed to enhance the effective management of marine mammals in and around MPAs across the East Asian Seas. Attended by over 45 participants, including a Steering Committee member from China as a speaker, the webinar underscored the urgent need for effective, long-term conservation and management of marine mammals.

6. The webinar marked NEAMPAN's first joint activity with an expanded partnership involving COBSEA and the EU, enhancing NEAMPAN's visibility beyond the subregion.

MPA Talk/ Approach and Criteria for NEAMPAN Sites Expansion

7. The first “MPA Talk” took place virtually on 28 March 2024, bringing together Steering Committee members from China, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation. The primary goal was to discuss strategic approaches to revitalizing NEAMPAN by reflecting on its achievements and challenges over the past decade. Key discussions highlighted the importance of expanding NEAMPAN sites and proposed thematic seminars and collaborative initiatives, such as enhancing ecological connectivity among MPAs and implementing localized MPA management approaches. Participants also underscored the importance of showcasing NEAMPAN’s benefits to MPA managers by leveraging the UN framework for broader impact and fostering stronger partnerships with international and regional organizations. It was agreed that the secretariat would research on potential collaborative activities with partners and develop a zero-draft of the NEAMPAN’s revitalization with the planned activities. The meeting minutes was reviewed and cleared by the Steering Committee (See Annex I. Meeting minutes of MPA Talk).

8. As of 1 November 2024, the second MPA Talk is scheduled for 12 November 2024 as part of the NEAMPAN workshop 2024, aiming for deeper discussions with broader stakeholder engagement. In response to the proposed approach and criteria for NEAMPAN Sites Expansion presented at SOM-26 in November 2023, it will discuss NEAMPAN’s strategic directions for the coming years, aligned with its priority activity themes and modalities based on the NEAMPAN Terms of References, and consider potential sites for expansion to support the proposed activities.

Study of Ocean-Based Climate Actions of NEAMPAN Sites

9. As reported at SOM-25 and SOM-26, the secretariat initiated a study of ocean-based climate actions across NEAMPAN sites, beginning with a tailored analysis focused on the Republic of Korea. A senior Korean specialist, Dr. Jungho Nam from the Korea Maritime Institute, with expertise in the country’s ocean-based solutions submitted a draft report in Q3 2024. The secretariat plans to finalize and publish the report in Q1 2025, following the revision and editing process (See Annex II. (Draft) Report of the study project on climate change and marine protected areas (Republic of Korea)).

10. The secretariat will continue this analysis with China, through work anticipated to start in November 2024. A consultant, Dr. Linlin Zhao, First Institute of Oceanography, has been identified in consultation with China’s Steering Committee and is expected to submit a draft report by end of March 2025.

11. The secretariat will, then, continue the study for Japan and the Russian Federation.

NEAMPAN Workshop on “Advancing Marine Protected Areas for Climate Action, Biodiversity, and Resilience”

12. The secretariat is planning to organize the NEAMPAN workshop in Qingdao on 11-12 November 2024, in collaboration with the First Institute of Oceanography (FIO) under China’s Ministry of Natural Resources, and the China-PEMSEA Sustainable Coastal Management Cooperation Center (CPC). With the theme of “Advancing MPAs for climate action, biodiversity and sustainable development”, it will be the first NEAMPAN workshop held outside the Republic of Korea since its launch in 2013. The workshop will be attended by NEAMPAN Steering Committee members, MPA site experts, representatives from international organizations, and Chinese experts from institutions including FIO, China-PEMSEA CPC and Ocean University of China (See Annex III. Report of the NEAMPAN workshop 2024).

East Asia Seas Congress 2024

13. The secretariat plans to attend the East Asia Seas Congress, hosted by the Ministry of Natural Resources of China, Xiamen Municipal People’s Government, and Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) in Xiamen on 6-8 November 2024. NEAMPAN will organize a parallel session with the Korea Maritime Institute on the morning of 7 November 2024. This session will focus on “Harmonizing Oceans: Transboundary Strategies for Climate Resilience in North-East Asia”.

14. Additionally, NEAMPAN will participate as a presenter in a parallel session on “Sharing Experiences and Best Practice in Sustainable Management of MPAs, organized by FIO, China-PEMSEA CPC and PEMSEA; and as a panelist in the session of “Strategic Collaboration in Tackling the Triple Planetary Crisis in the East Asian Seas Region”, organized by UNEP, COBSEA and UNEP/GEF South China Seas Strategic Action Programme in the afternoon of 7 November 2024.

III. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

15. The Meeting may wish to request member States to consider the following:
- (a) Propose NEAMPAN activities that align with the scope of the Network, as outlined in the Terms of Reference, NEASPEC Strategic Plan 2021-2025, and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030);
 - (b) Indicate their interest in hosting or jointly organizing MPA-related activities;
 - (c) Consider the continuity, familiarity with NEAMPAN, and the willingness of Steering Committee members to actively support NEAMPAN initiative in alignment with its Terms of Reference when appointing replacements, to foster more streamlined

communication channels with Steering Committee members and MPA site managers;
and

- (d) Encourage additional nomination of NEAMPAN sites, including potential participation from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea through site nominations and/or involvement in NEAMPAN activities.

- 16. The Meeting may wish to review and approve the proposed activity plan (See Annex IV).

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